

I envision class projects centering on students going out and interviewing these veterans and preserving those videotapes for local history purposes, but to send a copy to the Library of Congress so that the library can digitize it, index it, and make it available, not only for today's historians and generation, but for future generations.

I envision students, young people in the 22nd, even the 23rd century, being able to pop up on the Internet the videotaped testimonies of their great-great-great-great-grandfather or grandmother and learn firsthand from their grandparents' own words what it was like to serve during the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam or the Gulf War. What an incredibly powerful learning opportunity that will be for future generations.

Every year I organize, on Veterans' Day, kind of a class field trip. I bring student groups into the VFW and American Legion halls, and I connect them to the veterans in our local communities and the veterans share their stories of the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, for instance, and the students are silent with attention, absorbing every last syllable that these veterans enunciate during that time.

It is an incredible event that goes on, not only the veterans sharing of the stories, many of them for the very first time since they served their country, but for the students to learn on this firsthand account what it was like with the sacrifice and the courage that our men and women in uniform provided our country at the time of need.

That is what is behind this Veterans Oral History Project. Last year we had some veterans that went into the American Legion Post 52 back in La Crosse that remind me of the purpose of this legislation. Ed Wojahn, a veteran of the Second World War; Jim Millin, also a veteran of the Second World War; Ralph Busler, who served three different tours of duty in Vietnam, all of whom came out and spoke to these student groups at the American Legion in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in my congressional district.

I can recall as if it happened yesterday, Ed Wojahn telling his story and breaking down as he recounted visiting last summer in Belgium the grave site of a World War II comrade in arms who fell during the opening days of the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Wojahn is 77 years old, and he told the students he was a 22-year-old Army combat engineer when he was captured by German forces in Belgium on his birthday, on December 18, 1944. His unit was without food, without ammunition, and was surrounded by German soldiers for 2 days before his captain finally surrendered. He stated, "There was no way to go. You went forward, you went backwards, sideways, there were Germans everywhere." It was an incredible story that he told along with the other veterans on that day.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I ask my colleagues, 250 of whom are original cosponsors, to move this legislation forward as quickly as possible since time is of the essence.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCOTT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DICKEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE FUTURE OF RURAL AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I and a group here rise tonight to talk about rural America, the heartland of this country. The last few years we have had the most fantastic economic boom in this country in our history, but the question many ask is why has so much of rural America been left behind. Why has rural America struggled for its economic life when suburban America is flourishing and enjoying unparalleled prosperity?

We believe that a lack of leadership is very much a part of that. Rural America has not fared well under the Clinton-Gore policies. We are also very concerned that rural America will not fare well under a Gore administration.

Agriculture, at a time when this country has expanded its ability to grow products, wonderful products, better, better yields, better quality, our farmers are fighting for their economic life. World markets have not been opened because of inappropriate public policies.

Mr. Speaker, public land, America owns a third of our land; and when we have Federal public policy changes, it impacts rural America, not urban-suburban America. It impacts rural America, because that is the land we own. We are a country rich in natural resources, and many people claim that our strength and our great past was because we had those natural resources.

Have we had appropriate policies for energy, for mining that allowed us to

enjoy the fruit of what was here? Many think not.

Defense, the number one issue in the Federal Government, would it be strong under a Gore administration? Rural education, as we have the debate now going on education, how has rural America fared? Most rural districts receive 1 percent to 2 percent of their money from the Federal Government when the Federal Government's claiming that they are funding 7 percent.

The complicated urban-type formulas are stacked against rural America in many people's opinions. Rural health care fighting for its economic life, rural hospitals fighting to stay open. Rural America sometimes gets paid half as much under the current policies and formulas devised by HCFA that has been managed by the Gore-Clinton administration.

Timber, good forestry, a country rich in soft woods in the West and hard woods in the East, we are now importing. I am told, about half of our soft woods. Because of policies similar to oil we are now importing 60 percent from foreign countries.

Endangered Species Act needing to be changed, positively, to save endangered species; but it has been used by radical groups to push their will on the American citizens and supported by the Gore-Clinton administration.

Regulatory process, something Americans do not think enough about, because, in my view, an overzealous bureaucracy that regulates you, they are regulating instead of legislating. When we legislate, we debate. We debate the facts. We make decisions. We cast votes, but when the regulators have too much power, and I think everyone agrees that the Clinton-Gore administration has been far too zealous in their regulatory powers. The courts have been turning over many of their regulations.

So as we go through these issues and a few others tonight, the first person I want to call on is my good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATKINS), of the third district who is interested in agriculture in Oklahoman agriculture and energy, and how it affects Oklahoma and how it affects rural America.

Mr. WATKINS. First, let me thank my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) for his concern and for his time tonight for us to talk about some of this inappropriateness and lack of action by this Gore-Clinton administration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like first for my colleagues to know that I stand tonight not for political reasons, but because of an emotional concern, a life-long emotional concern about small towns and rural areas of this country, yes, our farms and our agriculture interests also throughout this Nation.

Let me share with my colleagues, I loved agriculture to the point in small town rural America, but even to the point that I majored in agriculture when I went off to college, I got a couple of degrees in agriculture, so I stand